



(Press Staff Photos by Marcela Johnson)

Runner-up Elianah Guadiana, left, best costume winner Yalaxi Galaz, winner Taylor McWhorter, and contestants Sheridan Lynch and Aimerie Peña stand at the end of the Miss Grant County Scholarship Pageant, held Saturday at the Grant County Veterans Memorial Business and Conference Center. Inset: Galaz poses as the Kneeling Nun during the costume portion of the pageant.



# Governor highlights WNMU leadership in early childhood ed

By JUNO OGLE  
Daily Press Staff

Four years ago, Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed a bill expanding tuition-free college for New Mexico residents at Western New Mexico University. Friday, she returned to celebrate WNMU's graduates, many of whom were among the first to take advantage of the New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship.

"Right here at Western, we made history, because there is no other state in America that has free college like New Mexico," she said to cheers from the graduates and their families.

Lujan Grisham was the keynote speaker for Friday's graduation, in which several hun-

dred students walked across the stage to receive degrees and certificates. The stadium seating at Ben Altamirano Field and standing room on the field filled quickly, with overflow crowds directed to the Besse-Forward Global Resource Center auditorium to watch the ceremony's livestream.

Other than acknowledgment of incoming university President Jose Coll, who was at the ceremony, there was no mention in the governor's 20-minute speech of the two-plus tumultuous years at WNMU, which included allegations of improper spending on international travel and home

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# UNM research fellow connects culture to care

By MIKAELA JOHNSON  
Daily Press  
Correspondent

In a majority-minority state facing a severe physician shortage and a rural healthcare crisis, Bella Norero thinks Chicana-inspired conversations could be key to finding a solution.

A population health student at the University of New Mexico and a Cobre High School alumna, Norero took on the challenge of dissecting disparities in New Mexico rural health care systems. Her focus specifically aimed

to address the Hispanic population of Grant County.

Norero conducted her research through El Puente Research Fellowship, an undergraduate program designed as preparation for graduate-level studies.

The fellowship, offered through UNM's El Centro de la Raza, takes place over the course of two semesters, and the culmination of participants' research is the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Conference, which Norero presented at last month.

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# SILVER CITY DAILY PRESS

AND INDEPENDENT

# Revived pageant crowns new Miss Grant County

By MARCELA JOHNSON  
Daily Press Staff

A new Miss Grant County was crowned during a Miss Grant County Scholarship Pageant for high school girls, which was held Saturday after several years without a pageant in the area.

Cobre High School senior Taylor McWhorter won the title, with Cobre sophomore Elianah Guadiana taking the runner-up title and Yalaxi Galaz

winning best costume.

McWhorter earned a \$1,000 scholarship for her win, while Guadiana won a \$200 scholarship.

McWhorter said she plans to use the publicity that will come with her title to build on her community service work. She said that she works with more than 10 organizations in the county, and also serves as the Cobre High student representative to the school board.

"The work I already do, I want to make that bigger, and I would also like to work with more organizations so that that impact is bigger," she said.

After graduation, McWhorter plans to attend Western New Mexico University for nursing and health services. She said she has already received her associate degree through WNMU under the dual credit program.

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